



## NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Ebbets Field Site, Grant Square, Lubavitch Headquarters Focus of City Tech Faculty Members' Crown Heights Tour**

Brooklyn, NY -- April 17, 2007 -- A few days before the 60th anniversary of Jackie Robinson breaking Major League Baseball's color barrier, a group gathered on the site of the former Ebbets Field. This wasn't a bunch of Dodger fans still lamenting the team's half-century old exodus to Los Angeles; these 15 individuals were faculty members from various academic departments at New York City College of Technology (City Tech), and they were visiting Crown Heights to learn about the cultural changes that have taken place there.

"Nobody in Brooklyn is fully certain what neighborhood they live in," said tour guide Francis Morrone, only half-joking. Morrone, an architectural historian and author of five guidebooks, including one on Brooklyn, went on to say that "Ebbets Field is in Crown Heights but everyone used to say that the Dodger played in Flatbush. North of Eastern Parkway was supposed to be Bedford-Stuyvesant but residents complained so it became known as Crown Heights North."

The tour was part of an innovative National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)-funded faculty development project that brings together City Tech and the Municipal Art Society of New York, for which Morrone is a consultant.

Through readings, tours and lectures, participating faculty members are learning how the technological evolution of specific New York City neighborhoods (Jackson Heights, Flushing, Harlem, Sunset Park and, lastly, Crown Heights/East Flatbush) impacts social change.

One of the readings in preparation for the Crown Heights tour was Paule Marshall's 1959 classic novel, *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, whose main character is the daughter of Barbadian immigrants. The hard-working, ambitious mother in this family pursues her version of the American Dream -- to "buy house" in Crown Heights -- at all costs. The group also viewed and discussed excerpts from *A Life Apart* (a documentary about Hasidism in America) and Anna Deavere Smith's *Fires in the Mirror*, a performance piece about the 1991 riots in Crown Heights.

The City Tech faculty members are using their studies and first-hand experiences of these neighborhoods to create a curriculum for City Tech that combines the study of the humanities with technological and professional learning. A side benefit of the NEH project's hands-on approach is that the participating professors now have a better sense of the context of their students' lives; fall 2005 enrollment figures indicate that one in three City Tech students comes from the communities and surrounding neighborhoods being studied.

According to Robin Lynn, communications consultant for the Municipal Art Society, one of the reasons Crown Heights was chosen for the NEH project is the diversity of its distinctive architecture -- mansions from the late 19th and early 20th centuries (when it was one of the wealthiest Brooklyn neighborhoods), six-story Tudor revival, Mediterranean and art deco buildings built after the subway opened in 1920 along Eastern Parkway, and brownstones. In

recognition, an area in the northern section of Crown Heights has been proposed as an historic district.

"Ethnically, the area is diverse," said City Tech African-American Studies Professor Marta Effinger-Crichlow, who coordinates the NEH project. "The community known as Weeksville is an early enclave of African-American property owners. Thriving Hasidic Jewish and West Indian communities have been joined by Latin American and Russian immigrants."

She added, "We walked along St. Marks Avenue, which Francis called the 'Fifth Avenue of Crown Heights,' St. Marks Avenue, Grant Square, several large churches (the Union United Methodist Church, Hebron Seventh Day Adventist Church and St. Gregory's Roman Catholic Church) as well as 770 Eastern Parkway, which is the world headquarters of the Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidic movement. "We all wished the tour could have been longer because there was so much more to see."

The City Tech faculty members will present curriculum ideas based on their study of Crown Heights and other New York City neighborhoods on Thursday, May 10, at 12:45 a.m. to 2 p.m.m in the 6th floor Faculty/Staff Lounge of the Atrium Building, 300 Jay Street, in Downtown Brooklyn.

The largest public college of technology in New York State, New York City College of Technology of The City University of New York enrolls more than 13,000 students in 57 baccalaureate, associate and specialized certificate programs in the technologies of art and design, business, computer systems, engineering, entertainment, health care, hospitality, human services, the law-related professions, career and technology teacher education, and the liberal arts and sciences. Another 14,300 students enroll annually in adult education and workforce development programs, many of which lead to licensure and certification. Located at 300 Jay Street in Downtown Brooklyn, City Tech is at the MetroTech Center academic and commercial complex, convenient to public transportation.

Captions:

Effinger\_phillip.jpg -- Project Coordinator Marta Effinger-Crichlow (center) with other participating faculty members, including Hospitality Management Professor Susan Phillip (far right).

Vey\_effinger.jpg -- Humanities faculty member Shauna Vey with NEH project coordinator, Marta Effinger-Crichlow of City Tech's African-American Studies Department, on the corner of St Marks Avenue and Brooklyn Avenue.

Ebbets\_field.jpg --City Tech faculty members at the site of the former Ebbets Field.

Lubavitch.jpg -- City Tech faculty members on Eastern Parkway, across from the Lubavich Headquarters.

Grant\_square.jpg -- City Tech faculty members with Grant's statue in the background.

7thdayadventistchurch.jpg --City Tech faculty members listen intently to tour guide Francis Morrone.

All photos by Robin Michals, except the Lubavitch photo (by Michele Forsten)